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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000447

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [BM](#) [PRELEPHUM](#) [ASSK](#) [NLD](#)

SUBJECT: GOB STIFFS NLD COMPROMISE OFFER

REF: RANGOON 246

Classified By: P/E Chief W. Patrick Murphy for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Summary: After six weeks of silence, the GOB finally reacted to a National League for Democracy proposal for political compromise with an official editorial that accused the party of attempting to "grab power." NLD leaders called the editorial "unhelpful" and told us they were disappointed that the GOB mischaracterized NLD intentions. The NLD plans to convene the multi-party "Committee to Represent the People's Parliament" (CRPP) to discuss a joint response to the editorial and to a recent Sr Gen Than Shwe's speech in which he said it will take "a long time" to achieve democracy in Burma. NLD leaders remain concerned about Aung San Suu Kyi's security and well-being, but said they were unaware of any new plot or specific threat against her. End Summary.

12. (U) On March 29 and 30, several Burmese newspapers, including the regime's official daily, the New Light of Myanmar, published an editorial reacting to the NLD's February 12 proposal to convene the Parliament elected in 1990 in return for the opposition's recognition of the ruling regime as a legitimate transitional government. In issuing their proposal, which the NLD described as a "give and take" negotiating offer, the party had suggested the regime respond by April 17, Burmese New Year.

13. (U) Entitled "Flexibility or Trickery?" the lengthy diatribe accused the NLD of attempting to "grab power" by insisting on implementing the 1990 election results, eliminating a future governing role for the Tatmadaw (armed forces), and returning the army to their barracks. "The NLD views the Tatmadaw government as a military dictatorship junta," the editorial credibly stated, "and the fall of the dictatorship as democracy."

14. (C) P/E chief met on March 30 with NLD Secretary U Lwin and Chairman U Aung Shwe. The NLD leaders said they had received no direct reply to their proposal from the SPDC, nor did they expect to receive any. They acknowledged that the published editorial was the GOB's first, quasi-official reaction to their proposal.

15. (C) The NLD leaders viewed the editorial as "unhelpful" and expressed disappointment that the GOB mischaracterized NLD intentions, lied about historical facts, and slandered party policies. U Aung Shwe said the party was also dismayed that SPDC Chairman Than Shwe, in his annual Armed Forces Day address (March 27), stated that it will take "a long time" to achieve democracy in Burma. U Lwin said that the NLD planned to convene the multi-party "Committee to Represent the People's Parliament" (CRPP) to discuss a joint response to the editorial and to the Senior General's speech.

16. (S) On a separate issue, U Lwin and U Aung Shwe addressed a recent claim, reported on March 29 by an exile news service, that the exile "National Council of the Union of Burma" (NCUB) had received proof the "Burmese military were planning to assassinate Aung San Suu Kyi." The NLD leaders said they remain concerned about ASSK's security and well-being, given that she is incommunicado and without a proper bodyguard, but they were unaware of any specific new plot or threat against her. They noted that party arrangements for daily deliveries of food to her compound, via SPDC security intermediaries, remain in place and are uninterrupted. Her personal physician hopes to receive permission soon for his monthly visit to her compound.

17. (C) Comment: Although the SPDC continues to harass and intimidate NLD members, the regime has essentially ignored the party in its official press for several years. The GOB's published reaction to the NLD's compromise proposal was therefore unexpected. Although the GOB lambasted the NLD and reiterated its standard allegations of NLD collusion with "the West Bloc" and with terrorist exile groups, the editorial began with a curiously accurate synopsis of the NLD proposal, including the party's call for the release of ASSK and for possible mediation by ASEAN. We agree with NLD leaders that the regime has no intention of negotiating or responding to the proposal seriously. Nonetheless, the GOB has drawn public attention to the NLD's new approach via its

published rebuttal and made it clear which side refuses to
budge. End Comment.
STOLTZ